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ABSTRACT

Report cards on schools have become common in many states, but their contents and formats vary from state to state. A cursory glance suggests that variations may have little to do with presenting data that are valuable for educational improvement and policy formation, but detailed comparisons have been few. Requests for copies of report cards and explanatory information were made to all Southeastern states, and replies were received from 11 (Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia). Report cards and information were analyzed in the following categories: (1) measures of student performance; (2) student outcomes reported and reporting procedures; (3) levels of outcome data reported; (4) school and community factors reported; and (5) statistical procedures used in the evaluation. Results suggest little commonality among the states in measures, indicators, or procedures. There is little attempt to determine relationships between student/school/community characteristics and student performance, with only a tacit assumption that the characteristics reported influence outcomes. Implications for educational assessment and improvement are discussed. (SLD)

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AN ANALYSIS OF STATE REPORT CARDS ON SCHOOLS PRODUCED IN ELEVEN SOUTHEASTERN STATES

by
Russell L. French
Gordon Bobbett

Paper presented to the American Educational Research Association
New Orleans
April, 1994

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AN ANALYSIS OF STATE REPORT CARDS ON SCHOOLS PRODUCED IN ELEVEN SOUTHEASTERN STATES

by Russell L. French, Gordon Bobbett and Charles Achilles

I. INTRODUCTION

"Report cards" on schools have become common in many states. Their contents and formats vary from state to state. A cursory examination of the different reports suggests that the variations may have little to do with presenting data that are valuable to educators, policymakers, and parents in improving education and much to do with policy initiatives and the politics of education within the respective states. However, detailed examination and comparison of report cards has been minimal. There is reason to believe that such an investigation could be useful to a number of persons. That assumption led to the study reported here.

II. METHODOLOGY

Requests for copies of report cards/school reports or school profiles and explanatory information were made to all Southeastern states known to be publishing or developing data summaries. Eleven states provided materials that were useable. They were Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.

Each report card and the accompanying information were analyzed for similarities and differences in five categories: 1) instruments used to measure student performance, 2) student outcomes reported and the procedures for reporting them, 3) levels of outcome data reported; i.e., district, school, grade level, classroom, 4) school and community factors reported, and 5) statistical procedures used in evaluating the data

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reported. Findings of the study are reported in each of these five categories.

III. FINDINGS

Instruments Used To Measure Student Performance

As might be expected, instruments and procedures used to measure student performance differ from state to state. Table 1 displays the findings:

Table 1. Instruments Used to Measure Student Performance

STATE	INSTRUMENTS	COMMENTS
Arkansas	Minimum Performance Test, Grades 3, 6, 8	Percentage of 8th grade students passing and percentage of students passing all 12 tests at each grade level reported.
	Scholastic Aptitude Test 8, Grades 4, 7, 10	Percentages of students scoring at or below the 25th percentile, above the 50th percentile and above the 75th percentile are reported.
	American College Test (ACT)	Percentage of students taking the test is reported together with average score for the district.
		Percentage of seniors with composite ACT score of 19 or above is reported as "Scholarship ACT"
	Advanced Placement Examinations	Number of examinations taken per 1,000 students in grades 11-12 is reported.
Florida	Grade Ten Assessment Test (GTAT) (Reading Comprehension, Math)	Percentage of students below the 25th percentile and above the 75th percentile reported.
	American College Test (ACT)	Percentage of students (by gender and race) taking test and median score for school reported.

	Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)	Percentage of students (by gender and race) taking test and median score for school reported.
	Average Number of Students Per Computer	Used as an indicator of readiness to use technology.
	Completion of Upper Level Science and Math Courses	Percentage of students (by gender and race) reported
Georgia	Curriculum Based Assessment (CBA), Grades 3, 5, 8 (Language Arts, Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies, Health)	Matrix sampling procedure used; scores reported by percentage of students in each quartile.
	Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Grades 3, 5, 8	Percentage of students in each quartile reported.
	Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) Grade 11 (Reading, Math, Written Expression, Science, Social Studies)	Reported in grade equivalents. NOTE: All scores are reported in 19 school system groupings based on school district size and percentage of students on free/reduced lunch.
Kentucky	No student performance outcomes reported.	1991-92 profiles contain only 16 school/community factors "relating to quality." Results of statewide achievement testing program will be Part II of Profile in future years.
Louisiana	Criterion Referenced Test (CRT), elementary and middle/junior high.	Percentage of students passing at the school level is reported.
	Graduate Exit Examination, (CRT for secondary schools).	Percentage of students passing is reported.
	Norm Referenced Test (NRT)	Percentage of students scoring at or above the national 50th percentile reported.
	American College Test (ACT)	Average composite score reported. NOTE: All scores are reported by school, school system, state and nation (where appropriate).

Mississippi	Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP), Grade 5 (Math, Reading, Written Communication, Composite)	Reported as mean scaled scores for district and school
	Functional Literacy Exam (FLE), Grade 11 (Reading, Math, Written Communication, Composite)	Same procedure as BSAP
	Subject Area Testing Program (SATP), Algebra I	Same procedure as BSAP and FLE
	Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), Grades 4, 6, 8	Reported in terms of mean national normal curve equivalent for system and school.
North Carolina	California Achievement Test (CAT), Grades 3, 6, 8 (Reading/Language, Math)	Reported by percentage of students at each percentile in the district.
	N. Carolina Tests, Grades 3, 6, 8 (Writing, Social Studies, Science)	Reported for current year and past two years in percentiles
	NOTE: Writing test administered only at grades 6 and 8	
	North Carolina Tests, High School (Economics/ Legal/Politics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Physical Science, Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry)	Same reporting procedure as Grade 3, 6, 8 tests
	Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)	Average scores by district
	Advanced Placement Examinations	Number of students In district scoring 3 or above
	Percentage of students in Grades 9-12 Earning 5 or more units toward graduation	
	Percentage of Graduates completing required UNC Admissions Courses	

South Carolina	Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP), all applicable grade levels (Mathematics, Reading, Science, Writing).	Percentage of students meeting State standard (700 scaled scores) for current year and preceding two years reported, and median scaled score for school with comparison group percentile rank and State percentile rank. NOTE: 5 comparison groups of schools are created based on contextual factors: % free lunch, % reduced lunch, median % at/above CSAB standard, median years of teacher education and school type (elementary, secondary)
	Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 8), (Reading, Mathematics, Language)	Percentage of students at/below 25th percentile, above 50th percentile, and above 75th percentile reported.
	School Gain Index (SGI) and Exceeding Expectations Index (EEI)	SGI predicted for each school based on SGIs of all schools in comparison group. Difference between predicted SGI and actual SGI is the school's EEI. NOTE: SGI uses longitudinal analysis; comparison of some students across 2 or more years. NOTE: Outcomes are reported for school, school cluster, and State using means, medians and percentages.
Tennessee	Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP), Grades 2 thru 8 and 10 (Reading, Language, Math, Science, Social Studies)	Formerly reported as average percentile at each grade level; now reported in terms of average gain over two years and percentage of gain (plus or minus) against national norm.

	Tennessee Proficiency Test (TPT), Grade 9	Reported as percentage of students passing test (required score of 70 percent) NOTE: Scores reported at school system level until 1992-93. Grade and school level reports have since been instituted.
Virginia	Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT), Grade 1 (Verbal, Quantitative, Nonverbal)	Reported in average scores' percentile equivalents.
	Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Grades 4, 8 (Reading, Language, Work-Study Skills, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies)	Reported in average scores' percentile equivalents.
	Tests of Achievement And Proficiencies, Grade 11 (Mathematics, Written Expression, Sources of Information, Science, Social Studies)	Reported in average scores' percentile equivalents. NOTE: Scores are reported at the school system level.
West Virginia	PSAT, Grades 10, 11	Percentage of students taking test reported.
	American College Test (ACT)	Percentage of students taking test reported. Average composite score reported.
	Scholastic Apptitude Test (SAT)	Percentage of students taking test reported. Average verbal and quantitative scores reported.
	Advanced Placement Examinations, Grades 10, 11, 12	Number of students taking specific AP exams reported.
	Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills, Grades 3, 6, 9, 11 (Language, Mathematics, Reading, Science, Social Studies, Basic Skills, Spelling, Study Skills (Grades 6, 9, 11 only), Word Analysis (Grade 3 only)	Reported as mean school percentile.

Analysis of this table indicates that all states reporting student performance outcomes (10 states) use state-developed tests to measure aspects of student academic performance. All of the states except Tennessee report scores from at least one recognized national achievement test; e.g., Stanford Achievement Test, Iowa Test of Basic Skills, California Achievement Test. Test scores/results are presented differently in each state, and in five states (Arkansas, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia), indicators other than test scores are included as measures of performance.

Student Outcomes Reported

Table 1 also provides the information necessary for comparison of student outcomes reported in the eleven states. Arkansas reports the percentage of students passing its minimum performance tests at the 8th grade level and the percentages of students passing all 12 tests in this battery at grades 3, 6 and 8. SAT 8 scores are reported by percentages of students scoring at or below the 25th percentile nationally, above the 50th percentile and above the 75th percentile. ACT data are reported in two ways: percentage of students in the school district taking the test and the percentage of seniors with composite scores of 19 or above. Advanced Placement Examination scores are not reported in Arkansas, only the number of AP exams taken per 1,000 students in grades 11 and 12. Obviously, percentage is the common denominator used to report results or participation across the several assessments in use in this state.

Florida uses percentages and median scores in reporting two sets of assessment results. Percentages of students scoring below the 25th percentile and above the 75th percentile on the Grade Ten Assessment Test are reported. Median scores on the ACT and SAT examinations are used.

Georgia reports percentage of students by quartile on its Curriculum Based Assessment and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, but reports subject area test scores (TAP) in grade equivalents. Like Florida, Georgia is

using two reporting mechanisms, congruent with the two types of outcome measures in use.

In 1991-92, Kentucky had not yet begun to report student outcomes. Its new statewide achievement testing program was still in development at that time. Those who are familiar with the Kentucky Instructional Results Information Program (KIRIS) are aware that both assessment instruments and reporting formats must be quite different to serve the needs of the state's new school accountability authentic assessment programs.

Louisiana, like Arkansas, relies on simple percentages for reporting most testing results. Percentages of students at the school and system levels passing the Criterion Referenced Exam (CRT) and Graduate Exit Exam (GEE) are reported. The percentage of students scoring at or above the 50th percentile on the state's Norm Referenced Test (NRT) is reported for both the school and system. However, average ACT composite scores are provided.

Mississippi uses a mean scaled score reporting format for its BSAP, FLE and SATP testing programs. However, the state reports Stanford Achievement Test scores in terms of what it calls a mean national normal curve equivalent. Both sets of data are provided for system and building levels.

North Carolina reports percentages of students at each percentile level except for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (average district scores) and Advanced Placement Examination results (number of students scoring 3 or above). These results are reported at system, building and grade levels, wherever data for all three levels are available.

South Carolina uses several statistical procedures for reporting data. Results of the Basic Skills Assessments (BSAP Program) are reported in percentages of students meeting the State standard which is a scaled score of 700. For these tests, a school median scaled score is

also presented together with median scaled scores of other schools in a comparison group and statewide median scores. As outlined in Table 1, the State has created five comparison groups or school clusters based on six contextual factors: percentage of student receiving free lunch, percentage of students receiving reduced lunch, median percentage of students at or above SAB standard, median years of teacher education, and school type (elementary, secondary). Stanford (SAT 8) results are reported in South Carolina by the percentages of students at the school, school cluster and state levels scoring at or below the 25th percentile, above the 50th percentile, and above the 75th percentile.

Tennessee reported the school system's average percentile score at each grade level for each test in its comprehensive Assessment program (TAP) until 1992-93 and the percentage of students passing the Tennessee Proficiency Test (scores of 70 percent or above). The reporting procedure has changed with the advent of the Tennessee Value Added Assessment Program (TVAAS).

Virginia uses system level average score percentile equivalents to report all test results (Cognitive Abilities Test, Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Tests of Achievement and Proficiencies). The single reporting system creates consistency in interpretation across tests.

West Virginia reports both the percentage of students within a school taking the PSAT, ACT and SAT and the average compositive scores for the school on the latter two measures. The numbers of students taking any and all Advanced Placement Examinations at grades 10, 11 and 12 are reported. Results on the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills are reported in school mean percentile scores.

While most of the reporting states provide state level results for comparison purposes, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee use test results to compare current student performance with past performance and to compare performance in like schools. However, each state

approaches its evaluation differently.

The North Carolina report card provides four comparisons of student performance for each school system:

- comparison of current levels of student performance with those of previous years,
- comparison of performance of the school system with all other school systems in the state,
- comparison of performance of the school system with similar school systems in the state,
- comparison of current levels of student performance with state accreditation standards.

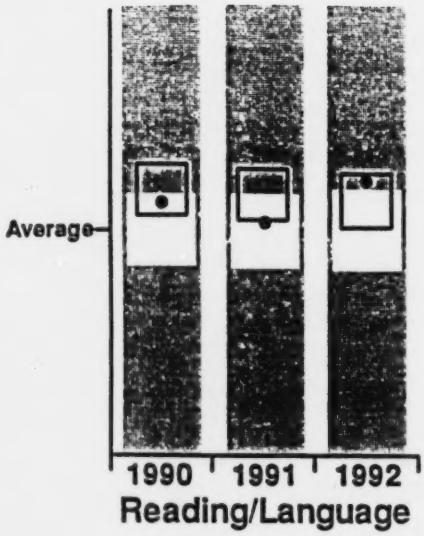
Some measures also allow comparison of the performance of a school system's students with that of students nationwide. In North Carolina's approach, school system and community characteristics are used to calculate an index of advantagement. This index, which takes the form of a positive or negative number, is the vehicle for comparison of educational outcomes in similar school districts. The comparison of student performance with state accreditation standards is accomplished by summarizing school system test scores into four curriculum areas (mathematics, reading/language, science, social studies), deriving a single system achievement score for each curriculum area and, ultimately, a single overall achievement score for the school system, a score representing achievement across all curriculum areas. It is then possible to determine whether student performance in a school system is average, below average or above average and to determine the system's level of achievement for each of 34 state performance standards which are the basis for school accreditation. Figure 1 provides examples.

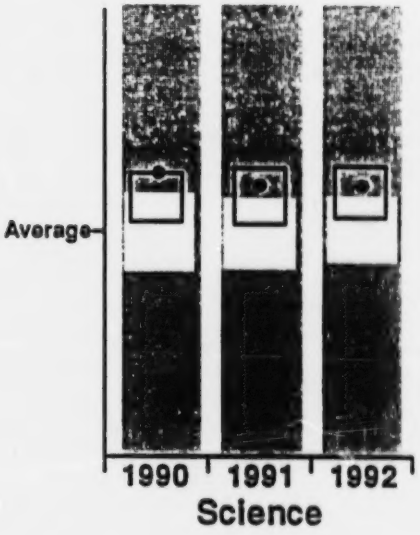
South Carolina's evaluation approach is somewhat similar to North Carolina's. Four comparisons of student performance are reported, where appropriate:

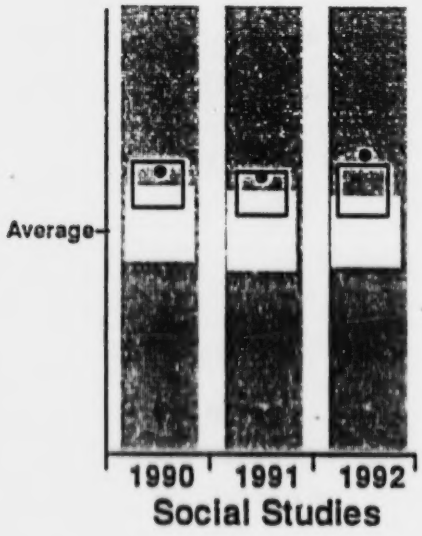
- comparison of current levels of student performance with those of the past two years,

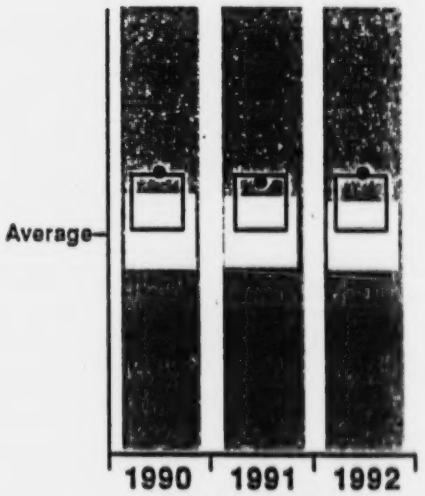
Figure 1. North Carolina Presentation of Achievement Data

Achievement by Subject Area









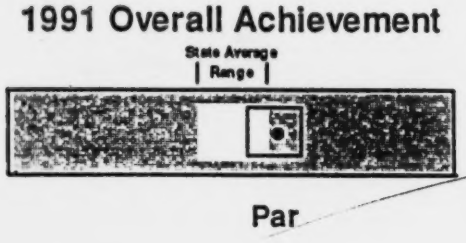


Figure 1 (continued)
North Carolina Presentation
of Achievement Data

BUNCOMBE COUNTY
1992 ACCREDITATION STATUS

		Standard	Criterion	Performance	Level of Compliance
1.	(1.1)	Attendan	94%	93.92	•
2.	(2.1)	5 Units of Credit for Graduation	80%	88.8	••••
3.	(2.2)	Entry to UNC Institutions	35%	51	••••
4.	(2.3)	Qualify for NC Scholars Program	10%	20.5	••••
5.	(2.4)	Voc. Ed. Unemployment Rate	≤ County	5.2	••••
		County Youth Unemployment		16.4	
		Follow-Up Survey Response Rate		89.8	
6.	(2.5)	Percent Certificates	≤ 3%	1.4	••••
7.	(3.1)	Compensatory Reading	1 NCE	8.4	••••
8.	(3.2)	Compensatory Math	1 NCE	.	
9.	(3.3)	Dropouts	≤ 2.4%	3.63	••••
10.	(4.1a)	CAT, 3rd Grade Reading	40-50%ile	55.4	••••
11.	(4.1b)	CAT, 3rd Grade Language	40-50%ile	60.5	••••
12.	(4.1c)	CAT, 3rd Grade Mathematics	40-50%ile	76.3	••••
13.	(4.2a)	CAT, 6th Grade Reading	40-50%ile	57	••••
14.	(4.2b)	CAT, 6th Grade Language	40-50%ile	59.5	••••
15.	(4.2c)	CAT, 6th Grade Mathematics	40-50%ile	69.5	••••
16.	(4.3a)	CAT, 8th Grade Reading	40-50%ile	61.6	••••
17.	(4.3b)	CAT, 8th Grade Language	40-50%ile	61.9	••••
18.	(4.3c)	CAT, 8th Grade Mathematics	40-50%ile	63.2	••••
19.	(4.4)	Writing Essay, 6th Grade	40%	46.7	••••
20.	(4.5)	Writing Essay, 8th Grade	40%	61.7	••••
21.	(4.6)	Science, 3rd Grade	40-50%ile	66	••••
22.	(4.7)	Science, 6th Grade	40-50%ile	60.2	••••
23.	(4.8)	Science, 8th Grade	40-50%ile	62.8	••••
24.	(4.9)	Social Studies, 3rd Grade	40-50%ile	65.6	••••
25.	(4.10)	Social Studies, 6th Grade	40-50%ile	55	••••
26.	(4.11)	Social Studies, 8th Grade	40-50%ile	58.4	••••
27.	(5.1)	Algebra I	40-50%ile	60.8	••••
28.	(5.2)	Algebra II	40-50%ile	60.1	••••
29.	(5.3)	Biology	40-50%ile	65.4	••••
30.	(5.4)	United States History	40-50%ile	56.4	••••
31.	(5.5)	Chemistry	40-50%ile	60	••••
32.	(5.6)	Geometry	40-50%ile	63.5	••••
33.	(5.7)	English	40-50%ile	54.2	••••
34.	(5.8)	Physics	40-50%ile	48.5	•••

SUMMARY	NUMBER	PERCENT
Standards Fully Met (••••)	31	93.9
Standards Met Level 1 (•••)	1	3
Standards in Warning Status (••)	0	0
Standards Not Met (•)	1	3

Accreditation Eligibility: Seventy-five percent of standards must be met at Level 1 (including "Warning Status") or Fully Met in order for the school system to be eligible for accreditation. For 1991-92, this means that 26 standards must be met by systems that offer Compensatory Mathematics and 25 standards must be met by systems that do not.

NOTES:

(a.) If performance is within the range of scores shown under the criterion (above), the level of compliance is met at Level 1. If performance meets the criterion for Level 1, but no improvement was made from the preceding years, the level of compliance is "Warning Status." If progress is not made for two consecutive years, the standard will be lost.

(b.) For Standard 2.4 to be met, the vocational education unemployment rate must be less than the county youth unemployment rate and the response rate to Item H of the Job Skill Completer Follow-Up Survey must be equal to or greater than 75 percent.

(c.) Standard 3.3 is met if the dropout rate is less than 2.4 percent, or if the number of dropouts is either 10 percent less than the previous year or 10 percent less than the average of the previous two years or 10 percent less than the average of the three years.

- comparison of current levels of student performance with predicted levels of student performance,
- comparison of performance of the school with similar schools across the state,
- comparison of performance of the school with all other schools of its types (elementary, secondary) across the state.

To facilitate these comparisons, a School Gain Index (SGI) is developed using the six contextual factors reported in Table 1. These SGIs are then used to develop five comparison groups of schools within the state and to predict gain for the next year for each school. The degree to which a school exceeds or falls below its predicted gain becomes its Exceeds Expectations Index (EEI). Figure 2 exemplifies this report.

When fully implemented, Tennessee's value added assessment approach will result in rewards and penalties to schools and school systems based on performance gains over a minimum of two years. The procedure used to compute gains is too complex to be fully explained here. In essence, estimated mean gain of a group of students in a specific subject is produced from mixed model equations. That gain is then compared with national norm gains, and the relationship of local gains to national gains is determined using scale score points. Bar graphs vividly present to the school or school system its comparative gain at each grade level in relation to national norms. Figure 3 provides an illustration. Georgia and Kentucky also use in-state groupings of school systems for comparison purposes. Every Georgia system is assigned to one of 19 groups based on school district size and percentage of students on free/ reduced lunch. In Kentucky's profiles (when completed), comparisons within "educational development regions" will be possible.

Levels of Outcome Data Reported

The eleven state reports differ in the levels of information presented as indicated in Table 2.

Figure 2a: South Carolina's Presentation of Stanford-8 Results

STANFORD-8 TEST RESULTS
STATE AND GROUP COMPARISONS

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REPORT 1991-92

STANFORD-8 TEST RESULTS
STATE AND GROUP COMPARISONS

DISTRICT:
SCHOOL:

BEDS CODE:

SCHOOL TYPE: MIDDLE
GROUPING CATEGORY: 2

GRADE	SUBTEST	1989-90 NUMBER OF STUDENTS	1989-90 MEDIAN SCALE SCORE	1989-90 STATE %TILE RANK	1989-90 GROUP %TILE RANK	1990-91 NUMBER OF STUDENTS	1990-91 MEDIAN SCALE SCORE	1990-91 STATE %TILE RANK	1990-91 GROUP %TILE RANK	1991-92 NUMBER OF STUDENTS	1991-92 MEDIAN SCALE SCORE	1991-92 STATE %TILE RANK	1991-92 GROUP %TILE RANK
5	READING	110	625	36	.	104	625	28	38	97	625	27	39
	MATH	109	649	72	.	104	645	57	79	96	643	58	79
	LANGUAGE	108	644	68	.	103	640	52	82	97	638	39	60
7	READING	95	652	54	.	115	653	48	80	104	669	68	93
	MATH	95	681	86	.	115	687	93	97	104	699	98	97
	LANGUAGE	95	651	57	.	115	651	57	78	104	667	74	90

NOTES: INV = ONE OR MORE CLASSES OF STUDENT RECORDS WERE INVALIDATED.
"." = NO SCHOOL DATA AVAILABLE OR COMPARISON GROUP CHANGED.

Figure 2b: South Carolina's Presentation of School Gain Index

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REPORT - 1991-92

DISTRICT:
SCHOOL :

BEDS CODE:
GROUPING CATEGORY: TWO

LONGITUDINAL ACHIEVEMENT GAINS REPORT FOR 1990-91 AND 1991-92 RESULTS

GRADE	SUBTEST	NUMBER OF STUDENTS TESTED IN SPRING 1992	NUMBER OF STUDENTS MATCHED WITH SPRING 1991 NON-REPEATERS	REPEATERS	TOTAL PERCENT OF STUDENTS MATCHED WITH SPRING 1991	GRADE / SUBTEST GAIN INDEX ZERO BASE	200 BASE
5	READ	97	84	4	90.7	-5.1	149
	MATH	96	83	4	90.6	-1.4	186
6	READ	104	94	0	90.4	1.6	216
	MATH	104	94	0	90.4	0.9	209
7	READ	104	93	2	91.3	-2.2	178
	MATH	104	93	2	91.3	7.3	273
8	READ	105	97	2	94.3	0.9	209
	MATH	105	97	2	94.3	4.6	246

THE TOTAL SCHOOL GAIN INDEX (SGI) FOR THIS SCHOOL IS 0.9 OR 209.

THIS SGI HAS A STATEWIDE PERCENTILE RANK OF 79 AND A GROUP PERCENTILE RANK OF 94.

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS METHODOLOGY

BASED ON THE PERFORMANCE OF ALL SCHOOLS, AN SGI IS PREDICTED FOR EACH SCHOOL, ADJUSTING FOR THE INFLUENCES OF 5 CONTEXT VARIABLES: (1) PERCENT OF STUDENTS QUALIFYING FOR FREE MEALS; (2) PERCENT QUALIFYING FOR REDUCED-PRICE MEALS; (3) TEACHER EDUCATION LEVEL; (4) CSAB SCORES (FOR SCHOOLS HOUSING ANY OF GRADES 1-4); AND (5) SCHOOL TYPE - ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE, OR SECONDARY.

	ZERO BASE	200 BASE
ACTUAL SGI FOR THIS SCHOOL:	0.9	209
PREDICTED SGI FOR THIS SCHOOL:	-0.8	192
DIFFERENCE	1.7	17

THE SCHOOL GAIN INDEX IS THE MEDIAN OF THE DISCREPANCIES (POSTTEST-PREDICTED) FOR ALL MATCHED STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL. THE SCHOOL GAIN INDEX HAS A RANGE FROM ABOUT -7 TO +7 (130 TO 270) AND A MEAN NEAR ZERO (200).

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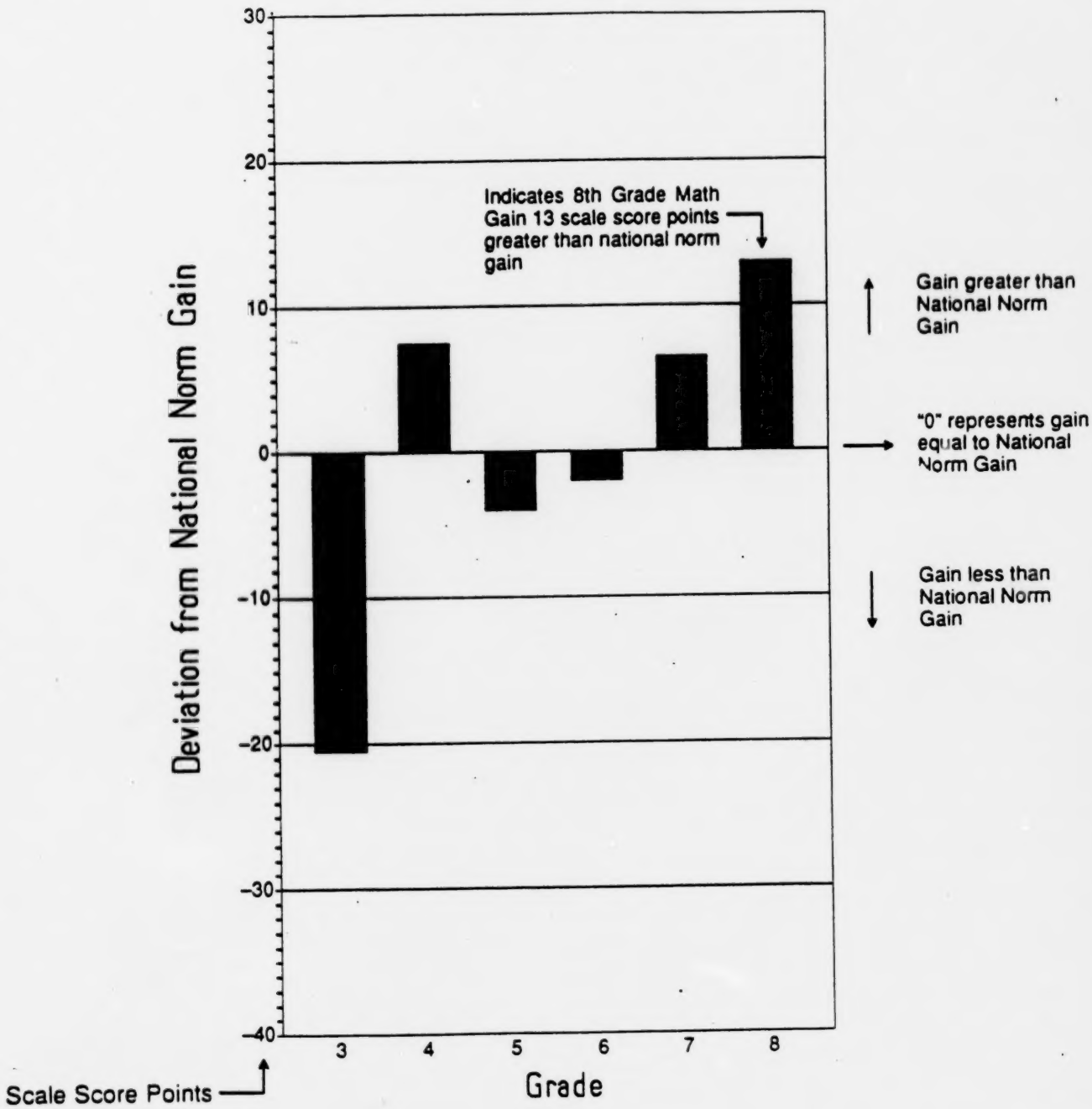
Figure 3. Tennessee Value Added Assessment Presentation

ILLUSTRATION Math



Based on 2 year Average.

Table 2. Levels of Data Presented In State Report Cards

State	Performance Data	School/District Characteristics
Arkansas	District Level Grade Level*	District Level
Florida	District Level School Level Grade Level*	District Level School Level
Georgia	District Level Grade Level*	District Level
Kentucky	Currently NA	Educational Development Region Level District Level
Louisiana	District Level School Level	District Level School Level
Mississippi	District Level School Level Grade Level*	District Level
North Carolina	District Level School Level	District Level
South Carolina	School Cluster (Comparison Group) Level School Level	District Level School Level
Tennessee	District Level School Level Grade Level	District Level
Virginia	District Level Grade Level*	District Level
West Virginia	District Level School Level	District Level School Level

*Grade level data provided for tests given only at specified levels.

Only three states (Arkansas, Georgia, Virginia) do not provide school level performance data, and only one state (Tennessee) provides grade level performance data for all grade levels two through ten. One state (South Carolina does not appear to provide performance data at the district level. Only Florida, Louisiana, South Carolina and West Virginia provide information in their report cards about student and school characteristics at the school as well as the district level. Kentucky adds information about these characteristics at a sub-state regional level to its school district report.

School and Community Characteristics

School and community characteristics presented in the eleven state report cards differ by more than levels reported. However the characteristics presented can be clustered in categories: student characteristics, school/district characteristics, financial characteristics of the community. Table 3 provides the comparison:

Table 3: Student, School And Community Characteristics Identified In Report Cards

State	Student Characteristics	School/District Characteristics	Community/District Financial Characteristics
Arkansas	●Percent free/reduced lunch ●Percent black, white	●Pupil/teacher ratio ●Percent Black, White teachers ●Percent students requiring at least one or more remedial courses as public college freshmen ●Percent taking Alegebra I or higher, grades 9-12 ●Percent taking biology, chemistry, physics or advanced science, grades 10-12 ●Percent dropout, grades 7-12 (last five years) ●Percent student attendance ●Percent completion rate (% graduates who entered 9th grade) ●Percent retention, grades K-8 ●School system size ●Area in district in square miles	●Resource rate (computed from wealth of community and number of students) ●Percent families above poverty level (1980 census) ●Number of mills local taxation in effect ●Per pupil expenditure ●Average teacher salary ●Board/ superintendent principal expense (sum of state funds reported as administrative expense) ●Athletic expense (expenditure for athletics divided by ADM)

		•Number of certified staff •Percent adults with 4 or more years of college	
Florida	•Racial distribution (White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Indian) •Percent free/reduced lunch •Percent gifted •Percent handicapped •Percent in federal compensatory programs •Percent limited English Proficient (by race) •Percent habitual truants	•Percent kindergarten retention •Percent first grade retention •Graduation rate •Student mobility (%) •Student attendance (%) •Percent students promoted, K-3 •Percent students promoted, 4-6 •Percent in school suspensions •Percent out of school suspensions •Percent corporal punishment •No full time teachers and staff •Racial/Ethnic composition of staff •Percent teachers by degree levels •Percent teachers by experience levels •Staffing ratios (pupils per teacher, pupils per administrator, pupils by librarian) •Instructional staff per administrator	•Per pupil expenditure •District funding by source (local, state, federal)

Georgia	•Percent free/reduced lunch	•School system size	
Kentucky	•Percent free/reduced lunch	•Percent instructional staff with Rank II certificates or higher (with percent deviation and actual deviation from state average) •Percent instructional staff below Rank III certification (with deviation and percent deviation from state average) •Percent graduates who entered the 9th grade (with deviation and % deviation from State average) •Percent student attendance (with deviation and % deviation from state average) •Pupil/teacher ratio (with deviation data) •Percent graduates entering college (with deviation data)	•Average annual teacher salaries (with percent deviation and actual deviation from state average) •Local financial index (local revenue per child divided by assessed value per child) (with deviation and % deviation from state average) •Cost per pupil of educational materials (with deviation and % deviation from state average) •Cost per pupil for instruction (with deviation and % deviation from state average) •Cost per pupil for administration (with deviation and % deviation from state average) •Percent local resources expended (with deviation data) •Percent State resources expended (with deviation data) •Percent Federal funds expended with deviation data)

Louisiana		•End-of-year membership, regular education •End-of-year membership, special education •Percent faculty with Masters degree or higher •Percent classes by grade and class size range: K-3: 1-12, 13-20, 21026, 27 or more 4-12: 1-12, 13-20, 21-26, 27-33, 34 or more •Percent classes taught by teachers certified in that field •Percent student attendance •Percent dropouts by grade •Percent students suspended •Percent students expelled •Number of school faculty •Number of schools in district	
Mississippi	•Percent race (black, white) •Percent gender •Percent limited English proficient •Percent handicapped	•Average daily attendance	

North Carolina	•Number and percent race (American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, Black, White) •Percent gifted •Percent handicapped •Percent in compensatory education programs •Percent free/reduced lunch •Percent absent more than 14 days	•Membership (number of students) •Average number of students per teacher) •Percent teachers with graduate degrees •Number of high school completers •Number of vocational education completers •Number of NC scholars program course completers •Number of students taking AP exams •Number of students in grades 9-12 earning 5 or more units toward graduation •Number of graduates completing UNC required Admissions Courses	•Local per pupil expenditures •Total per pupil expenditures •Average local teacher salary supplement •Parent education level (percent 8th grade, 8-12, high school graduates, post high school)
South Carolina	•Percent free/reduced lunch •Percent gender •Percent race •Percent Chapter I •Percent remedial/ compensatory	•Percent student attendance (with state percentile rank) •Percent teacher attendance (with state percentile rank) •Percent middle and secondary school dropouts (with percentile rank in state) •Median years of teacher education	

Tennessee	•Percent free/reduced lunch •Percent in special education •Percent chapter I students	•Number of schools •Average daily membership •Percent student attendance •Percent enrollment change •Percent oversized classes •Percent elementary schools accredited by SACS •Percent educators on Career Ladder Levels II and III •Percent diplomas granted (regular, honors, special education, certificate of attendance) •Percent students in vocational education courses	•Average expenditure per pupil •County per capita income •Average professional educator salary
Virginia		•Size of district (ADM) on September 30 and end-of-year •Pupil/teacher ratios, K-7, 8-12, English 6012, 1 •Pupil/instructional personnel ratio, K-6 •Number and percent students promoted •Percent 9th graders who graduated 4 years later •Number and percent graduates receiving standard diploma	•Receipts from State Sales and Use Tax, State funds, Federal funds, City/town/county funds, loans and bonds •Disbursements by service types (instruction, administration, attendance and health, operation and maintenance, food services, summer school, adult education, other educational programs, facilities, debt service)

		•Number and percent graduates receiving advanced studies diploma •Number and percent graduates receiving special diploma •Number and percent graduates receiving certificate •Number of total graduates •Number and percent of graduates attending 2 year, 4 year colleges and other continuing education •Number and percent dropouts by race and ethnicity (Am. Indian/Alaskan, Asian/Pacific Islands, Black, Hispanic, White) •Age/grade distribution of students (under 5 yrs. to 20 or over, K to post-graduate) •Average daily attendance and percent attendance •Number of days taught in school year •Total number of instructional personnel and number per 1000 students	•Per pupil expenditure from each funding source •Index of local ability to pay costs of the Standards of Quality (computed from true value of property, adjusted gross income, taxable retail sales, ADM and total population) •Average annual salaries for elementary and secondary principals, assistant principals and teachers

		•Number (full-time equivalents) of administrative service and support personnel (superintendent and asst. superintendents, instructional support, clerical/ technical, teacher aides, facilities, attendance and health, pupil transportation, operation and principals, Other)	
West Virginia		•Grade range in each school •School enrollments •Number of split grade classes •Average class size •Percent attendance •Percent transfers in •Percent students promoted •Number of graduates •Percent dropouts •Percent students in grades 9 and 11 in College Prep program, Tech Prep Program, Vocational program, Other •Enrollment by subject in foreign language, English/ language arts, mathematics, science, social studies	

		•Pupil/teacher ratio •Pupil administrator ratio •Teacher and administrator levels of education (numbers with Bachelor, Bachelor + 15, Masters, Masters + 15, Masters + 30, Masters + 45, Ph.D., Other) •Percent students taking PSAT, grades 10, 11 •Percent students taking ACT and/or SAT •Number of students taking AP exams, grades 10-12	

Analysis of Table 3 indicates that three of 11 states (Louisiana, Virginia, West Virginia) do not report any of the characteristics we have classified as student characteristics. All eleven states report several school and/or school district characteristics. Five states (Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and West Virginia) report no community or school district financial characteristics. While the number and type of characteristics reported vary from state to state, it is appropriate to suggest that Georgia and Mississippi focus their reports on academic outcomes, presenting only a limited amount of additional information which they feel is needed to present and interpret test scores. States such as Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee which have moved to accountability programs and/or some form of in-state comparisons of productivity tend to provide and use a great deal of school/district/community data for purposes of comparison.

Statistical Procedures Used In Evaluating Data

As already reported in Table 1, the eleven state report cards analyzed use a variety of statistical procedures in reporting student outcomes. Arkansas relies heavily on percentages. Florida reports

percentile scores for its Grade Ten Assessment Test and median school score for the ACT and SAT. Georgia uses quartiles for its Curriculum Based Assessment and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, but computes grade equivalents for its Tests of Achievement and Proficiency. Kentucky's achievement report is not yet in place. Louisiana uses percentages for reporting all but ACT results, for which average composite scores are reported. Mississippi computes mean scaled scores for all tests except the Stanford Achievement Test for which national normal curve equivalents are computed. North Carolina determines percentile rankings for all test results except the SAT and Advanced Placement examinations which do not lend themselves to this analysis. South Carolina reports percentages of students achieving designated scaled scores or median scaled scores where appropriate. Tennessee formerly reported mean percentile scores for each grade level, but now uses deviation from national norm gain. Virginia reports average scores in percentile equivalents. West Virginia provides average scores for the SAT and ACT and mean school percentile scores for its Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills.

North Carolina and South Carolina are unique in computing indices which are employed in determining levels of school or district student achievement. Tennessee's use of mixed model equations relying heavily on regression analyses in its attempts to determine value added to student performance by the district, school, and teacher is also a very different approach to data analysis. These three states can be viewed as "plowing new ground" among Southeastern states.

None of the report cards studied report statistical analyses of the impact of individual student, school or community factors/characteristics on student outcomes, although, it should be noted that researchers developing Tennessee's value added assessment program indicate that the impact of any and all factors are taken into account in the statistical models employed. Also, several school/community factors are collectively employed in the indices computed in North Carolina and South Carolina.

The factors used in the South Carolina SGI Index are identified in explanatory materials, but North Carolina reports do not identify the specific factors or procedures used in computing the Index of Advantagement.

Some current literature suggests that school factors such as curriculum structure, instructional methodologies, educator professional development, and school organizqtion should be reported as aids to local educators in determining how they might improve student achievement, and some assessment programs (e.g., NAEP) are beginning to collect and report some of this information. However, the eleven state report cards examined in this study do not yet report information of these kinds.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Although the sample of report cards analyzed in this study is restricted, several generalizations can be made:

1. There is minimal commonality from state to state in the performance measures and indicators incorporated into current state report cards.

2. Procedures used in analyzing and presenting student outcome data are not consistent from state to state. They appear to represent the dictates of state policy or the particular bent of report card developers.

3. Student, school, and community characteristics reported or used in interpreting data also vary from state to state. The three most commonly used factors are percentage of students on free/reduced lunch, student attendance (and its corollary student absence), and per pupil expenditures. However, six or more of the 11 states in the sample reported in some form pupil/teacher ratios, data about graduates, teacher degree or certification levels and school district size. At least five states reported average teacher salaries and dropout information.

4. There is little attempt to determine relationships between student/school/community characteristics and student performance. There appears to be a tacit assumption that the characteristics reported influence outcomes.

5. Early versions of state report cards tended to focus at the district/system level. Seven of these 11 reports draw attention to school level data.

6. While several of the reports provide for comparison with like schools and/or districts, there is little information provided

that would offer educators and community leaders insights into the factors in similar schools that might be contributing to higher performance levels, where those exist. For example, there is no information about curriculum structure, instructional methodologies, educator professional development, or school organization and governance.

7. At least half the states in this study are attempting to use factors other than test scores as indicators of student and school performance.

V. IMPLICATIONS

Several implications emerge from the findings and conclusions of this study. We offer them as points for discussion.

The New Standards And Assessments Debate. When viewed in the context of the current effort to develop new standards and assessments that extend beyond state boundaries, this study suggests that much groundwork will need to be done before policymakers and educators are willing to "buy in" to regional or national frameworks and procedures. These report cards demonstrate clearly that each of several neighboring states has approached the task of assessing and portraying schooling and student performance independently and differently. It is uncertain that they will be willing to compromise their perspectives and practices in order to provide a "common view" of schools and student outcomes.

The Measurement of Student Performance. Without exception, each of the states sampled in this study is using one or more state developed tests/test batteries in its assessment package. While there are good reasons for the development of these measures, one cannot help but acknowledge the time and costs expended by each state. Further, one wonders to what extent these state produced measures create information that is any better than assessments produced for use nationally. The argument has been that state produced tests more validly reflect the curricula within that state. Yet, teachers and administrators in many of the states sampled still question the alignment of the tests with their curricula. In light of current reform efforts, student and family mobility across state boundaries, and the tremendous costs involved in

development of new assessments, at least one question must be posed, "Is it time for interstate collaboration? Can we really afford to reinvent the wheel in every state?"

Report Card Development. As demonstrated in this study, state report cards on schools typically portray school districts and schools through a variety of performance indicators and student, school, community characteristics. The tacit assumption is that the characteristics somehow impact performance. However, there is no indication of the actual influence of any characteristic or set of characteristics on the outcomes presented.

In a series of other papers, the authors have demonstrated that few of the characteristics usually presented have much impact on student academic achievement. In those studies, the factors that most commonly influence student performance are attendance and per pupil expenditure. However, even these factors influence performance differently at different grade levels.

Further, as indicated in the conclusions of the present study, there has been little attempt to build into report cards information that might be useful to educators desiring to improve performance in their schools. As a teacher or school administrator, I can compare the performance of my school with others, but I have no idea why their performance might be better.

In essence, it may be time to relook at the structure and content of school report cards. They can be an extremely useful tool for improvement, but that potential is not being reached.